1s Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir
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half a mile to a mile across; it is bounded on the south by wooded mountains, and on the north by a great steep cliffy limestone mass, which rises to 7000 or 8000 feet from the river. To the view the mountains join above and below, closing in the valley. The height of Gurez is 7800 feet above the sea. This elevation, combined with a great amount of cloud and rain in summer and of snow in winter, makes the climate inclement. In this and some other respects the place reminds me much of the valley of Pādar. Here the only crops are millet, buckwheat, and peas, which are raised by help of irrigation; rice will not ripen. The best produce of Gurez are the ponies, which are the best of their size for loads that I ever met with. In reaching this upper part of the Kishangangā Valley, we had already come into the tract occupied by Dārds; in the village of Gurez itself there is a mixture of Dārds and Kashmīris, but the former predominate. From there onwards the people are almost entirely of that race, and dialects of the Dārd language, a language quite different from Kashmīrī, are spoken. Where the two large streams meet, just above Gurez, is the end of the wider part of the valley. The southern stream may be said to be a continuation of the Kishangangā, as its course is the longer, and it has, I believe, the greater volume; it flows from the district called Tilel. If one had to go to Tilel one would not attempt to follow up the stream, for the gorge it here comes out of is impassable except when (for a week or two it may be) the river is frozen over; travellers must go a few miles up the other, the Burzil, stream, and cross a Pass which leads into the cultivated valley of Tilel. This I have never visited. Our own way leads for three days' march up the course of the northern stream. The valley of it is narrow, bounded by mountains rising some 4000 or 5000 feet; the stream flows for the most part in a rocky bed; for the first ten miles there are many little plateaus above the level of it, formed by the alluvium of side streams; over these the path leads us, past several small villages; on the mountain-slopes is a good deal of pine-forest; as the level of the valley rises the forest does not reach so high up the sides, and farther on the pine is replaced by spruce and silver firs.

1: Drew G-9 (1862-1972) 1873 AV1 Kashmir
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133 From the place called Bangla a road for Astor and Gilgit leaves the valley and rises the ridge on the north; this has of late years come to be considered on the whole the easiest route to those places; the Pass just above (called Kamri) is little over 13,000 feet, and the way is shorter by some five miles than the other. But the other is the one we will follow, continuing in the [340] valley. There are now no more villages, though at one place, [341] called Minmarg, a little buckwheat is grown (at an elevation of about 10,500 feet) by villagers from below, who come there in the summer, but the crop with difficulty ripens. At this place, and farther up the valley to the south-east, are moraine-mounds of old glaciers. The last halting-place on this side the watershed is at • [137] Burzil. Up to here there was no sign of a Tibetan climate; and so far as I, not being a botanist, could tell, there was the same vegetation, of forest, thick grass, and flowers, as in Kashmir.

487 133 At Burzil two roads part; one (spoken of in the last chapter) leads north-eastwards across the Deosai plateau to Skárdú, the other, going due north, will bring us to Astor. Following this latter, we rise, not very steeply, a height of about 2000 feet in five or six miles; the Pass, which is called Dorikun, is 13,500 feet high; it is not a défile, but a neck between the two parts of a rocky ridge; this is of granite, and the peaks here have a character not uncommon with that rock—they are massive in general form, but serrated and jagged at the uppermost edge; soon beyond the rock changes to slate and altered slate. Having crossed the Pass we are in the basin of the Indus; we are on the eastern branch of the Astor River. The valley in which this flows we now descend.

This Pass is crossed on the fourth march from Gurez; after gradually descending for three more marches, down the narrow valley enclosed by not very steep mountains, we come to where the eastern branch of the Astor stream falls in; it was along this latter that the other road would have led us that branched to the left some way back; then another few miles and we reach Astor. Of the two Passes crossed by these two roads the Dajikun Pass is the easier, and, although rather higher, is more practicable when under snow; it opens in the spring a few weeks earlier, and it

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remains open in the autumn a few weeks later, than the other; the way, however, as before said, is some miles longer. Keeping back the account of the valley of Astor for another subject-heading, we will now just finish the route, considering it merely in the light of a road to be got over.

Astor we may count thirteen or fourteen marches from Sirinagur. Thence five marches bring us to Bawanji on the Indus. Down to this point Indus ponies are not uncommonly brought, but there are many places very trying for them; the worst is the descent of the Haiti Pir, a spur-pass just above Bámghát, one march short of Bawanji. As far as Gilgit itself Indus ponies are seldom taken, on account of there being a few spots where it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to pass. From Bawanji to Gilgit there is a distance of three or four marches. One has first to cross the Indus; the passage is now easily effected by a ferry-boat; then the road leads some 12 miles up the Sa Valley, whence we cross a 2000-foot ridge, after which we descend into the Gilgit Valley; one march along this brings us to Gilgit itself, over 230 miles from Sirinagar.

ASTOR.*

We will now look more closely at the Astor Valley, through which we hurried. Its two chief branches have a length of 60 or 70 miles, reckoning from the source of each to the junction of the Astor River with the Indus. The more easterly of the two, that one down which came the road we traced, I have only seen under snow, and I have not much more to say about it.

At the head of the easterly branch is the Kamri Pass, of 13,700 feet; the rest of the ridge being at heights of 14,000 and 15,000 feet. The descent on the north is steep for 1000 feet, and then the valley falls with a gentle slope. On this north side of the ridge a slight difference in the vegetation is observed as compared with that of the Gurai Valley; the grass has completely withered, the bush-willow; the birch-tree does not so much abound;

* The English always call this place "Astore," but we came to the mouth of a [illegible]

1; Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AVI Kashmir
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and the pine-forest is less extensive, while spruce-fir has become rare. Birch is found nearly up to 12,000 feet, and *Pinus excelsa* at 11,200. Some of the hill-sides have great stretches of birch-wood, which, as I saw them in autumn, made a glorious blaze of yellow, from the valley-bottom far up the mountain, enveloping detached woods of dark pine.

Coming down the valley we reach traces of cultivation at the level of 10,000 feet. First are detached hamlets and small villages, bare, with no trees round them. Then, at Rattú, are some apricot trees; at the next place are some small walnuts; while at Chogám, which is 8500 feet, are many fine walnut trees, and from there onwards the villages are mostly well shaded by fruit-trees.

But in that upper part it is chiefly traces of former cultivation that one sees; they are enough to show that crops will grow and ripen; but the fields are waste, the hamlets deserted. In most of the mountain-tracts we have hitherto gone over the population has increased nearly up to the limit of land available; but here is room for hundreds of settlers. This state of things was brought about by the raids of the people of Chilás. The Chilásis are a Dárd race inhabiting a long valley on the west of Diyámir or Nangá Parbat. Until about 1850 they used to make occasional expeditions for plunder into this Astor Valley. Often they came over the Mazeno Pass to reach these higher parts, while for Astor itself, which they also attacked, they came round by the Hatú Pass and Dúiyán. The plunder they came for was cattle and people to make slaves of; their captives they do not sell, but they keep them for their own service, making use of them to take their flocks and herds to pasture. But since it would be almost impossible to keep grown men as their slaves at such work, where opportunities for escape would be plentiful, they used to kill the men and carry away only the women and the young people.

It was these raids that determined Maharaja Gulab Singh to send a punitive expedition against Chilás; this he did in 1851 or 1852, I am not sure which; one force went direct from Kashmir, and one advanced by this Mazeno Pass. The Dográs were in great straits for provisions, as the communications were

1; Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir
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right side of the snowy Pass, and is always ready to advance to Gilgit if required. I know very little of the history of Astor. Bernier, who wrote about the year 1660, in enumerating the countries that border Kashmir, speaks of the territories of *Raja Gamon*. Now from geographical position I infer that this was the ruler of Astor. When the Sikhs held Kashmir, the Astor Raja was tributary to them; he had become so without any force having been sent; for a time he remained in quiet. But a curious thing happened. When Wazir Lakpat (who was lieutenant of Zuráwar Singh, who was servant of Raja Gulâb Singh, who was a tributary of the Sikhs) was victorious in Skárdú, he came over the Harpo Lá and invaded Astor. Lakpat besieged the Astor fort for four months; at the end of which time it was given up for want of provisions, and the Raja was taken away prisoner to Skárdú; and this though he was on terms of friendship and (in a degree) dependent on the Sikh Governor of Kashmir. At last, representations on the subject went to Lâhor, and from there Gulâb Singh received directions to desist from interfering with Astor, so the Raja was sent back. But not long afterwards the Sikhs themselves from Kashmir required a passage through the Astor territory on their way to Gilgit (as will be related in Chapter XIX.), and not only so, but they required to make their communications sure; with this object a Sikh post was placed at Astor, and from that time the independence of the Raja diminished; now there is a titular Raja, for whose subsistence some provision is made, whether by pension or from land I do not know.

At Astor and for many miles on there is one general character of the valley; at the bottom it is very narrow; the river is quite confined between the ends of great spurs from the lofty mountain-ridges on both sides; the cultivation is on very small spaces, usually some hundreds of feet above the valley-bottom. The hill-sides are partly broken into cliffs and partly of a smooth surface, grown over with grass in tufts, and with bushes of pencil-cedar scattered over, while in parts sheltered from the sun *Pinus*

1: Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir
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133 *excelsa* grows, of small size, and makes a thin forest; above, the
311 mountains often rise to lofty rocky and snowy peaks.

137 Below Astor, as well as in the higher part of the valley, are deserted lands which again tell of the raids of the Chilāsis. This part should be a country of fruit-trees, but when the lands were deserted these perished for want of water; the old watercourses have now come to be in such a state that it would take much labour again to bring the water over the fields. On some of the terraced fields I saw trees growing which must have been 100 years old; this shows that for long the same state of hostility and insecurity had continued.

133 A mile or two below the village of Dashkin, on turning a spur, we open a tract of a character different from what we have lately seen—a wide valley, somewhat of the amphitheatre form, but with the base also sloping; over both the sides and the base are extensive pine forests, through which we contour, avoiding the broken ground below, where among rocks the river flows; stretching back at a gentle slope the ground rises above the limit of forest to a ridge easy of access, about 14,000 feet high; over this ridge is a path by which the Chilāsis have before now irrupted.

[137] In this forest grows the edible pine (*P. Gerardiana*), this being the only other locality in the territories, besides Pādar, where I have met with it.

One other hollow round which we travel, and we get to the last spur, that which overhangs the valley of the Indus. It is a sharp spur-ridge, the Pass over which bears the name of Hatū Pīr. From this we look straight across the Indus Valley on to a great steep mass of mountains, the greater part of the surface of which is bare, either rock or talus, only in the upper part pine-trees are dotted here and there; a ravine comes down in front, by the side of which is a small patch of cultivated land—the little village of Thalīcha. The river Indus winds through what, in a large way, is a plain between two mountain-ridges, but is really made of sloping fans on both sides—stony tracts—below the level of which flows the river, winding and leaving little stretches of sand in the hollows of its bends.

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the Astor river to its junction with the Indus, and then runs north along the Indus to Bunji. It was once a flourishing tract, but has never recovered from the great flood of 1841, when the Indus was blocked by a landslip below the Hattu Pīr, and the valley was turned into a lake. Opposite Bunji is the valley of Sai, and 6 miles farther up the Gilgit river falls into the Indus. Gilgit is about 24 miles from the Indus, and has a considerable area of fertile irrigated land. The Wazārat now includes the tract known as Haramush on the right bank of the Indus, and numerous valleys leading down to the Gilgit river. To the north the boundary reaches Guach Pari on the Hunza road, and up the Kargah nullah as far as the Bhaldi mountain to the south in the direction of Darel. From Gilgit itself mountain roads radiate into the surrounding valleys, and its geographical position now, as in ancient times, renders the fort on the right bank of the Gilgit river an important place. A suspension bridge connects Gilgit with the left bank, which is here as barren as the right bank is fertile. The ancient name of the site under its Hindu Rās was Sargin. Later it was known as Gilit, which the Sikhs and Dogrās corrupted into Gilgit, but to the country people it is familiar still as Gilit or Sargin Gilit. It lies in the most mountainous region of the Himālayas. Within a radius of 65 miles there are eleven peaks ranging from 18,000 to 20,000 feet; seven from 20,000 to 22,000 feet; six from 22,000 to 24,000 feet; and eight from 24,000 to 26,600 feet. At their bases the mountains are barren and repellent, but at 7,000 feet there are fine forests of juniper and fir. Higher up grows the silver birch, and above all vegetable growth lie sweep after sweep of glacier and eternal snow.

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Botany. The pencil cedar is found from 14,400 feet down to 6,000 feet, and sometimes reaches a girth of 30 feet. *Pinus excelsa* grows between 9,500 and 12,000 feet. The edible pine is common in Astor, ranging from 7,000 to 10,000 feet. The useful birch-tree is common, and grows as high as 12,500 feet. The tamarisk does well in the barren valleys up to 6,000 feet. Roughly speaking, the upper limit of vegetation round Gilgit is 16,200 feet; above this the rocks are stained with lichens.

Fauna. Here are found the ibex and *mārkhor* (*Capra sibirica* and *C. falconeri*), and their deadly foe, the beautiful snow ounce (*Felis uncia*), and occasionally the wild dog (*Cyon dukhunensis*). The red bear (*Ursus arctus* or *isabellinus*), the snow cock (*Tetraogallus himalayanus*), and the grey partridge are common; and many of the migratory birds of India, wild geese,

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4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
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Astor

finally made war on us, but on whom the hand of Fate at last descended with crushing power, always cheated in this way. I used to think it was very typical of his brutal, overbearing, treacherous nature.

The game is very rough and ready, and each goal hit produces a wild *mêlée*, as the striker or his side must be able to pick up the ball for the goal to count. The man who has hit the goal will throw himself off his pony and try and pick up the ball, while the other side, with fine impartiality, hit him or the ball, or ride over him, in their endeavours to save the goal. Why each game does not end in sudden death and a general free fight I could never imagine, but a serious accident is rare. In most parts the losing side has to dance before the winners when the game is over. As all the men love dancing, this is no great hardship. With the advent of the British Subaltern the polo rules of the Hindu-Kush have undergone revision and improvement.

A day at Astor enabled us to rest our camp and attend to letters. Then we started again, double marching ourselves to Doian, the last stage before the descent into the Indus valley is made, where I proposed to shoot for a few days in the Lechur, one of the nullahs leading into the Indus, and good for markhor. Our camp was to go on by single marches to Bunji, where the Indus is crossed.

The character of the mountains now began to change completely. Below eight thousand feet hardly a tree is to be seen, except where irrigation fertilises the lands of a village. Steep bare hillsides, streaked with reds and ochres, but generally

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV3

133 grey and pale sandy yellow, covered where anything
137 will grow with wormwood scrub, plunge down thousands of feet into the valleys, which are only wide enough at the bottom to admit the passage of the chafing stream. If you happen fortunately to be about the altitude of eight to twelve thousand feet, where the rain falls, you will march through forest and grass lands. Above that, again, run bare rock-strewn hillsides, the last vegetation being always the dwarf juniper, and from thirteen to fourteen thousand feet is the line of eternal snow.
[487] As a rule your road runs in a valley as near the bottom as possible; for days at a time you see no forest; when you do see it, it is a green patch thousands of feet above you, and you only get an occasional peep at a snow peak. Mile after mile of arid sand and rock is passed, unrelieved by a single tree, except where a stream has cut its way from the higher hills and piled up an alluvial fan
[244] at right angles to the main valley. Then you find a lovely little oasis of green terraced fields running hundreds of feet up the hillside, a village embowered in fruit-trees and vines, and you sit down and thank God for the shade.

487 The march to Doian was severe; the road ran
133 first through scattered forest of edible pine and
137 pencil cedar, then dropped into the river-bed to climb, by laborious zigzags, a thousand feet to avoid a cliff. This was repeated again and again, the road running occasionally for miles in sand full of loose stones, the *debris* of the hills above. The last ten miles of the march is, however, lovely: much of it through one of the finest pine forests in the world,

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV 3

487 which fills an enormous bay in the hills. The moon
133 had risen before we reached camp, and the view, as
137 we topped the last spur and saw below us the twinkle of the torches carried by the men coming to meet us, was one I shall never forget. A veil of mist, flooded by brilliant moonlight, stretched across the great abyss which yawned a thousand fathoms deep at our feet, and turned the peaks of the Hindu-Kush, which lay before us, into visionary delectable mountains of Beulah, barred with silvery grey.

Whatever dreams the beautiful scene evolved were rudely dispelled. We had only the inside fly of one tent, and were sleeping on the ground, having come as light as possible. It began to rain steadily directly we got to bed, and poured all night. I managed to keep perfectly dry, sleeping in an explorer's bag, but the unfortunate Robertson, with nothing but waterproof sheets, spent the night in pools of water. We stayed at Doian a few days, and I was lucky enough to get a fine markhor with a forty-seven-inch head.

133 We moved up to a camp about eleven thousand feet high, from which we had the most superb views. We were on a spur of Nanga Parbat, the watershed between the Indus and Astor river, and surrounded by a complete ring of snow-peaks, the average height of which is about twenty thousand feet. The view from the crest, a couple of thousand feet above our camp, is one of the finest I should think in the world, certainly one of the finest in the Hindu-Kush. In a gorge nine thousand feet below, at your very feet, runs the Indus, giving that depth and proportion which is so often lacking in a mountain

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
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the rest of the landscape was in the evening shadow, would have made a theme for another "Chill October." In the foreground lay a flat piece of meadow land, the brightness all gone out of the green, framed on each side by copses of leafless willow, through which the stream in a dozen small branches ran cold and clear over a broad bed of grey shingle. To the right great bare grass slopes led up to precipices of granite; to the left a sombre pine forest came down into the plain. In the middle distance a dense wood stretched across the valley, a study in all shades of grey. The lower parts of the tree-trunks were dark and rugged, dashed here and there with black, the upper trunks smooth and silvery, the bare boughs a duller grey, the only touch of colour a few withered willows, whose leaves had not yet fallen, saved by the protecting wood beneath which they grew. Behind rose again grass-covered slopes, broken by masses of grey rock. The wood, with its heavy shadows under the trees, and no sky to be seen through its branches, gave the impression of great size, and was absolutely still. It seemed to appeal more to one in its look of ruin and death, and in some indefinable way of waiting, than when I had seen it last, and had camped under the shade of the same trees, then in all the beauty of their summer foliage.

A couple of days more carried me to Srinagar, then empty of court and visitors, all having gone to India for the winter, and so, after crossing the Woollar Lake, once more resonant with the musical cry of thousands of wild geese and ducks, and passing through the most magnificent autumn colouring

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Balti AV2
Dard AV3

makes a wound such as a chisel struck by a hammer might inflict. B 136

The ascent of the pass was pretty stiff; a steady grind of two hours and a half over glacier and snow slope, some of it to my mind none too safe for any one with no mountaineering knowledge or appliances. The view from the top was superb: snow-covered glaciers surrounded one; great granite peaks, jagged into the most fantastic shapes, shot out of them; a wall of snow mountains rose ahead, and towering above all was the mass of Nanga Parbat. I loitered on the top of the pass for some time drinking in the glorious scene, and then plunged down over sloping snow-beds covering the glaciers, so as to get clear before the sun softened the crust. Once off the snow the path was bad: first descending the terminal face of the moraine, then running for many miles over lateral moraines and shingle slopes till we got to grass; after this it wound through thickets of myrtle and masses of forget-me-not of every colour, ranging from heaven's loveliest blue through pink to white. B 133 487

We camped well above the birch in a grassy Alpine meadow, and next day a long double march of about thirty miles took us to Astor. The first part of the way was through pine forest, the glades covered with marguerites, violet and white; then the path ran along hillsides one mass of spirea, the air thick with its honey-like scent; and dropped gently down, passing a chain of small lakes, grass and willow bordered, the end of the valley blocked for many miles by a superb view of Nanga Parbat standing entirely alone. The last part of the march was very hot and trying, especially after we reached the Astor valley D 487 133 137 D 137

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir AV1
Dard AV3

D 137 and got on to the bare slopes again, but even here there was beauty on all sides, and we passed through masses of a flower like a hollyhock, mostly of delicate white, but some of a lovely pink.

000 At Astor we were met by Raja Bahadur Khan and conducted to our camp. Here I found a collection of letters, and spent a couple of days resting my camp, working off arrears of official correspondence, and inspecting the Kashmir troops, whose condition was deplorable. Robertson rejoined me here, wild to go into Kafiristan, and utterly dissatisfied with the appointment at Gilgit, to his holding which we had both looked forward with so much pleasure. He proposed, if Government agreed to his going, that some young doctor should be sent up to Gilgit to take his place. I was, naturally, much disappointed, but could not stand in his way, and we parted, two months later, in Chitral.

No other doctor was sent up that year, owing to official delays, and the result was that we were left with no one to look after the hundreds of troops in the Gilgit Command, to organise dispensaries and medical arrangements in the country, a thing to which I attached the greatest importance, or to take care of the *personnel* of the Agency. The medical work was retarded by a year, and there was unnecessary suffering among the troops, for the hospitals, such as they were, were useless.

D [361] I remained a few days at Astor to make myself acquainted with the local conditions, inspected the K 712 fort and the grain stores, and explored the hillsides for the site of a summer camp. The barrack accommodation, and the sanitary conditions were dreadful,